
The Life of an African American During the Civil War

You Decide

Lesson Plans for grades 4-5

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The Colonel Eli Lilly Civil War Museum
An Indiana War Memorials Museum

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INTRODUCTION

This series of lessons will help students become familiar with the 28th Regiment **United States Colored Troops** and the lives of African Americans in Indiana during the Civil War. All names are of real people. Five story lines will allow students to experience these lives. The **discussion questions** and **activity suggestions** will expand the ideas in the story. The interview with Chaplain Garland White will give students a first person account of the time and can be dramatized. According to the reading level of the students the story and interview can be read by individual children or read aloud. This will help the teacher point out the variations in the experience of the African American soldier and the white soldier. The lessons involve academic standards in social studies, math, language arts, and fine arts and may be used as part of an interdisciplinary unit.

Objectives

- ⇒ Students will be able to identify why a soldier joined the regiment.
- ⇒ Students will learn where two battles were fought.
- ⇒ Students will learn about two men in the 28th USCT Infantry Regiment.

Academic Standards

Social Studies

TO BE DROPPED IN LATER

Language Arts

Reading Comprehension — use appropriate strategies when reading for different purposes.

Writing Application — write for different purposes: narrative, information, and persuasion.

Listening and Speaking — ask thoughtful questions and respond orally; make an informational presentation; develop clear, organized speech delivery.

Math

Estimate and measure using customary units. Collect, organize, *analyze*, and *interpret data*.

Fine Arts

Draw a portrait, or illustration from a reading.



SUMMARY

A group of French settlers brought the first African Americans as slaves to the area that became the Indiana Territory in the mid-1700s. Under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, slavery was not legal, but many people were still held in slavery. Laws limited settlement to the small towns where freedmen and those who had escaped slavery already lived.

Many African Americans settled near **Quaker**¹ or **Society of Friends** settlements. In 1850, the counties of Wayne, Grant, Marion, Rush, and Randolph had the highest number of both African American and Quaker residents. Named for the families who started the settlement, the Roberts Settlement was in Hamilton County and Lyles Station was in Gibson County.

In 1861, African Americans could not serve as soldiers. Though they had fought in previous wars, an old law actually prohibited their service. By 1862, both sides saw African Americans as an untapped resource. In July of 1862, Congress gave the President the power to **enlist** African American men in the army and **navy**. **Union** Army units immediately formed in Kansas. After the **Emancipation Proclamation**, about 100 men from Indiana joined the 54th Massachusetts, the first regiment of African Americans formed in the North. The **Union Navy** had previously integrated them into all ships' duties. In December 1863, Hoosier soldiers were recruited for the 28th **USCT**.

The 28th **USCT** trained for the assault on Petersburg, Virginia. Their unit was to lead the attack. Early on the morning of the battle, the plan changed. Another unit would lead the advance. Instead of blowing an opening in the seigeworks, the mine's explosion made a large hole. The 28th **USCT** finally stormed the **Confederate** line gaining, their objective. The **Confederates** regrouped and forced a retreat, pushing the 28th **USCT** back into the crater. There were very high casualties. Nine months later Petersburg finally fell and the 28th **USCT** were among the first troops marching victoriously into Richmond.

At the end of the war, the 28th **USCT** served one more year in. They helped to keep the peace, built bridges and roads and ran telegraph lines. A public reception, after they **mustered out**, was held in January, 1866.

DID YOU KNOW?



- The population of African Americans in Indiana in 1860 was 11,428, a little more than 1% of the state's population.
- Approximately 180,000 African Americans (10%) served in the **Union** Army.
- Of the **Union Navy's** 118,000 sailors, roughly 19,000 were African American.
- There were 16 African Americans Medal of Honor winners during the Civil War.
- Approximately one-third of the African Americans who fought in the Civil War died.

¹ All words in bold are found in the vocabulary at the end of the lesson set.

TIMELINE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1843	Frederick Douglass, along with a group of abolitionist speakers, stop at Pendleton, Indiana. This is a part of their Hundred Convention's Tour. A mob, mostly people from out of town, cause rioting as the speakers begin. Douglass and others are injured.
1862	Militia Act of 1862 places pay at \$10 per month. The clothing allowance is \$3.50. This is not always followed. African American soldiers are routinely paid less than white soldiers. White soldiers receive \$13.00 per month plus clothing allowance.
July 17	Congress passes two acts allowing African Americans to join the army and navy . President Lincoln must approve units.
October 28	First battle in Kansas where African American soldiers prove their valor. Abolitionist Senator Jim Lane includes African Americans in his volunteer cavalry . Confederate soldiers attack his camp. Lane's unit stops the attack. Ten men are killed and twelve wounded in the battle.
1863	
January 1	Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation , freeing slaves in Southern states.
January 31	1 st South Carolina organizes with freedmen and former slaves.
May	The 54 th Massachusetts organizes as the first official black regiment in the North.
	Indiana does not yet allow enlistment , so 80-100 Hoosier African Americans go east to join the 54 th Massachusetts, some join the 55 th Massachusetts when the 54 th Massachusetts is filled.
July 16-18	The 54 th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment leads the assault on Ft. Wagner. Six hundred men courageously charge the fort. There are 272 killed, wounded, or captured.
November 30	Indiana begins recruitment of 28 th Infantry Regiment, USCT .
1864	
April 12	Fort Pillow taken by Confederate troops. Of the 292 African American Union soldiers there, only 62 survive.
June 15	Congress passes law; African American soldiers receive equal pay.
July 30	Battle of the Crater, Petersburg, VA.
1865	
March 23	General Order # 14, Confederate Congress allows slaves to join the Confederate army.
June	USCT sent to Brazos and Corpus Christi, Texas, for peace-keeping duties.
November	28 th USCT mustered out.
1866	
January 8	Public reception honors the 28 th USCT in Indianapolis.

What does this word mean?

abolitionists – people who wanted to put an end to slavery

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) – one of the first churches founded by African Americans

Anti-Slavery Friends (Quakers) – members of a religious organization who believed in the abolition of slavery

bounty – money paid to a person who chooses to join a military unit

cartridge – Minie ball and powder in a paper wrapper

cavalry – soldiers who are mounted on horses and scout for the army

Confederate – also called Rebels; shortened from the Confederate States of America; people who supported the states that seceded from the United States of America

conservative – people who held the view that the south should be allowed to keep their slaves

draft – choosing eligible men for required military service

Emancipation Proclamation – act adopted January 1, 1863, freeing slaves in **Confederate** territory; predecessor of the 13th amendment to the Constitution

enlist – to freely join a unit

enlistment – amount of time agreed to serve in a unit

musket – shoulder-held gun with a long barrel

mustered out – to officially leave the military service

navy – sea-born fighting unit

quota – assigned number

roster – list of members of a unit

Union – also called Federalists, people who supported the United States of America

United States Colored Troops (USCT) – regiments formed exclusively of African American men with volunteer, white officers

T O B E A
S O L D I E R

Y o u D e c i d e

by: Linda Grimes

In the following pages imagine yourself in the shoes of an African American. The time is during the Civil War in Indiana. You may be a son, a daughter, a father or mother, or a brother or sister. You and your family live in one of several settlements with other African Americans.

Begin reading on any of the first five pages. At the end of each page you will make a choice. Turn to the given page and continue reading the story. Definitions for highlighted words are listed on the back of this booklet.

My brother **enlisted** today. He wants to fight in the war against slavery. He is only 22. He will be gone for three years and I know that I will miss him. He has a girlfriend and I think they are serious. Mom says that I should not worry about him. I have enough to do with school and chores.

Mr. Smothers at Union Literary Institute says that it is our duty to defend the **Union**. He may close the school and join himself.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you want to know what it is like to **enlist**?
Go to page 11.
- ◇ Do you want to know about a battle?
Go to page 8.

Samuel Smothers grew up in Randolph County. He had only nine month's education at the county school. In the early 1860s he led the Union Literary Institute. He wanted other African American children the education he did not have.

When the war broke out, he continued to keep the school open. He wrote a newspaper for the school. When he closed the school and went into the **Union** army in 1864 he wrote:

I feel that the time has come when the interests of our distracted and bleeding country, and the interests of my race, require me to act rather than to talk or write.

Activities

- ◇ Make a list of actions you can do now that would carry on the spirit of Samuel Smothers.
- ◇ Make a table showing why African Americans would or would not join the army or **navy**.

It is official! President Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to fight the Rebels. He did not say if he means white troops only. Why not allow everyone to fight? When my dad was a boy Frederick Douglass, a famous **abolitionist**, came to Pendleton. That was back in 1843 and some of the people, mostly from out of town, tried to stop Mr. Douglass from speaking.

My cousin sent me a copy of the newspaper article just this spring where Mr. Douglass said: "Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service and formed into a liberating army." I'd like to have heard that speech. There are some people in this town who would disagree with these thoughts and would like to send all of us South into slavery.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you find out more about who can fight? *Go to page 6.*
- ◇ Do you move with your family to Canada so you avoid trouble? *Go to page 7.*

When the fighting began I thought I might miss the action. Everyone thought the war would last just a few months. What started with a few states leaving the **Union** turned out to be a real fight.

After the Congress passed the **Enlistment** Act in July 1862, allowing blacks to join the army, many free blacks wanted to join. The requirements were few. You had to be 18 years old and be at least 5'4" tall. It would help if you had good teeth, so that you could tear the paper **cartridge** apart before loading the **cartridge** into the **musket**.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you **enlist** in the army? *Go to page 9.*
- ◇ Do you join the **navy**? *Go to page 14.*

We were very glad to hear from our brother today. He is feeling better since he got over a cold. He said he will send along part of his pay when he gets paid. Everything is increasing in price, so the money will help.

Mrs. Knight got a letter from Aaron, too. He joined the 60th out in Iowa last October. He didn't want to wait until a unit formed here in Indiana. He wrote that he was on escort duty taking prisoners to Ohio.

Activities

- ◇ Fill in a Company Muster role. Write a paragraph describing information on the sheet.
- ◇ Debate the question: "Should girls and women be allowed to carry rifles and fight?"

We were camped near Petersburg, Virginia on July 30, 1864. The word came that the 28th **USCT** would not lead the charge into battle. The captain wrote, "our regiment was drilled by Major Rockwood in forming double column(s) and charging...and their (there) was not an officer but would have staked everything that we would break through their lines and go on to Cemetery Hill."

The blast came a little after dawn. The 28th **USCT**, held in reserve in a covered ditch, finally charged into the Crater. We made the **Confederate** line before being repelled by an overwhelming force. Four officers and thirty-nine **enlisted** men were killed of the two hundred men who began the battle. Forty-four men were wounded and several died later that week. Benjamin Trail was among the dead. He would not be a part of the triumphant march into Richmond the following spring.

Activities

- ◇ Write a letter home telling how you feel about going into the Battle of the Crater.
- ◇ Read aloud about the march into Richmond in the interview with Chaplain Garland White.

The recruiter came to Indianapolis today. On his uniform were bright shiny buttons with an eagle on each one.

There was a big meeting at the Bethel **AME (African Methodist Episcopal)** Church. Rev. Willis Revels wants to encourage the men to join the **Union** army. Massachusetts is looking for volunteers to fight for the **Union**. Governor Andrews of that state is forming a regiment of African Americans. He will not pay the cost of transportation there, but he will give \$10.00 a month in wages. There are men here who are considering joining because they need the **bounty** money.

In the Massachusetts regiment there will be men from everywhere, not just from Indiana. Indiana may recruit a regiment of its own with men from this area. If I wait, I can stay with my friends and family.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you wait for an Indiana unit to form? *Go to page 5.*
- ◇ Do you pay your own way and board the train for Boston, Massachusetts? *Go to page 13.*

Governor Morton did not call for African American troops in Indiana until December 3, 1863. This was after he was re-elected in November. The **conservative** nature of the state and the need for additional troops finally convinced the people of Indiana that African American men could fight, be wounded, and die the same as white soldiers. The troops also helped fill the **quota** for the state.

When the 28th Infantry Regiment **USCT** left Indianapolis, they were sent to Camp Casey. This is a camp outside Washington, D.C. and is part of the Army of the Potomac. There they built fortifications and helped move supplies.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you join the Indiana regiment? *Go to page 16.*
- ◇ Do you visit camp to see what it is like? *Go to page 17.*

The 28th **USCT** is one of the regiments under General Burnside. Their assignment is to lead the assault on the fort at Petersburg, Virginia. When the men are not standing guard and getting shot at by **Confederates** (who are on the walls of the fort) they drill.

The plan is that after the gunpowder explodes, the 28th **USCT** are to form two columns. Their attack will be like a wave of soldiers coming through the opening of a sea wall. All hope the day of attack comes soon.

Activities

- ◇ Write a letter home describing what it felt like to drill and prepare to be a part of a big battle.
- ◇ Draw a picture of your best friend in his full uniform.

In my small town there are many families who farm. We grow fruits and vegetables for our family. We raise a hog or two and maybe some chickens. The cow provides the milk and butter for the meals. Extra produce we trade at the small store for sugar or at the mill to grind the corn into meal.

My oldest son wants to **enlist** in the **Union** army. His brothers say that they can keep up with the chores around the farm. I am afraid that something will happen to him.

What do you do?

- ◇ Do you try to talk him out of going? *Go to page 24.*
- ◇ Do you let him **enlist**? *Go to page 9.*

My family moved from Kentucky to Randolph County, Indiana early in the 19th century. We are farmers. Family and friends of my family live on this land and in the near by village. I go to school at the Union Literary Institute.

The Union Literary Institute was founded by the **Anti-Slavery Friends (Quakers)**. It is open to all students. There is no separation made because of race, wealth, or rank. Everyone gets up at 5:00 a.m. Until breakfast everyone either studies or does chores to run the farm. The mornings and afternoons are spent in class. The youngest learn the ABC's. Older students study English grammar. The sciences of physiology, chemistry, and natural philosophy are also taught. Everyone on the board of the school is against war and slavery.

Just before the war a black man and a former student, Samuel Smothers, came to be the new principal. He does not know how long the school will stay open.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you leave school to **enlist**? *Go to page 25.*
- ◇ Do you stay in school and help work on the farm? *Go to page 20.*

I remember that day in April of 1861. The news came that Ft. Sumter was attacked by the **Confederates**. This was war and everyone thought that it would be over very quickly. Men from all over Indiana who were at least 18 years old went to Indianapolis to answer the call for soldiers.

Everyone was excited in our town, too, but no one left to join the army. Only white soldiers were accepted. Did the government think that we did not support the **Union**? Did they think that we did not want to **abolish** slavery in the South? Maybe the **navy** will accept us.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you want to join the **navy**? *Go to page 14.*
- ◇ Do you want to wait and see what will happen next? *Go to 20.*

*"We left our wives and little ones
to follow the stars and stripes..."*

Chaplain Garland White, 28th Regiment Sept. 19, 1865

The 28th Infantry Regiment, **United States Colored Troops** left Indianapolis for the Washington, D.C. area on April 24, 1864. This was almost five months after the regiment organized. In June they boarded a boat and went down the Chesapeake Bay to City Point, Virginia. On July 30, 1864, they fought in the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg. They were among the first troops to enter the city of Richmond after it was captured in April of 1865. Prisoners were exchanged while they camped at St. Mary's, Maryland in April and May of 1865.

Though the war was over, the army sent the 28th **USCT** to Brazos and Corpus Christi, Texas in June 1865. They remained there until November 1865, keeping the peace. On November 8, 1865, they **mustered out**. Traveling overland to New Orleans, Louisiana, they then went up the Mississippi to Cairo, Illinois. On January 6, 1866, they arrived in Indianapolis for a reception two days later.

Activities

- ◇ Draw a map of the places where the 28th **USCT** served.
- ◇ Make a time line of the service of the 28th **USCT** and other major Civil War battles.

We were sent south on a ship toward Petersburg, Virginia today. Our **Union** forces almost broke through to that city earlier this summer, but now there is a new plan.

Miners from Pennsylvania are digging a tunnel under the earthworks of the fort. They will fill it with gunpowder. After they ignite the gunpowder a hole should form big enough for us to rush through, surprise the **Confederate** army, and take the city. We hope to prove our honor on this field of battle.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you drill and prepare? *Go to page 21.*
- ◇ Do you go into battle now? *Go to page 22.*

It is 1862 and the War of the Rebellion continues. In this part of Canada the winter is colder than in Indiana. The rivers and trees and hills here remind me of home. We came to live here and to be free.

Yesterday I heard about a unit of African American soldiers. Senator Lane, of Kansas, recruited them for his **cavalry** unit. This is one of the first units to include African Americans.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you **enlist** in the Kansas unit? *Go to page 8.*
- ◇ Do you return to Indiana with your family? *Go to page 16.*

During the summer of 1862, **abolitionist** Senator Jim Lane accepted a commission in the volunteer **cavalry**. In Leavenworth, Kansas he recruited a regiment of escaped slaves. He asked the Secretary of War Stanton if he had any objections. Senator Lane ignored the negative reply and trained the unit with his white **cavalry** unit.

Near Butler, Kansas on October 28, 1862, **Confederate** soldiers attacked his camp. Lane's unit stopped the attack and drove the **Confederates** away. Ten men were killed and twelve were wounded in a battle. This was the first combat action for African American soldiers in the Civil War.

Activities

- ◇ Write an account of the battle in a letter home or in your journal.
- ◇ Draw a picture for an illustrated magazine of the battle. Look at illustrations in books for ideas.

Benjamin F. Trail was one of seven brothers who joined the **Union** army. He was the highest **enlisted** officer in the 28th **USCT**. From Camp Fremont he writes,

"We were offered \$7.50 per month but there was not one of us that took a cent, but I was willing to take mine as I knew that was all we were going to get at the present, but as long as no one else would take it, and I being the Sergt. Major (Sergeant Major) of the Regiment, I thought I would not come down lower than any one else, but I hope the time will come when we will be payed the same as other Soldiers..."

This is part of the fourteenth letter he wrote home to his brothers. When he wrote he numbered his letters so that his family could tell if a letter disappeared. His last letter came from White House Station, Virginia on June 4, 1864. In this final letter he described his trip on a ship, the noise of battle eight to ten miles away, and the wounded. He also described the night lit by hundreds of campfires before the tents of the men camped awaiting a battle.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you stand guard? *Go to page 19.*
- ◇ Do you ask someone to write a letter home for you? *Go to 12.*

Rev. Garland H. White was born a slave in Hanover County, Virginia. He escaped to Canada where he became an **AME** minister. Inspired by Frederick Douglass, he returned to Ohio. There he recruited African Americans for many of the eastern regiments.

In Indianapolis he **enlisted** as a private in the 28th **USCT**. His unofficial and then official job was to be a Chaplain, or minister. He supported the troops with comfort and help. When a battle was near, he spent many hours writing letters home for the soldiers who could not read or write.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you write a letter home describing what you do? *Go to page 17.*
- ◇ Do you write in your journal how you feel about the going into battle ? *Go to page 18.*

After the **Emancipation Proclamation**, many African Americans became soldiers. Recruiters from the eastern states encouraged free black men in Indiana to **enlist** in their units. Governor Morton also called for troops. After the **draft** of white men in 1863, the **quota** in Indiana began to be filled by African American men volunteers.

Fiery writer, Frederick Douglass, encouraged **enlistment** when he declared:

One let a black man get upon his person the brass letters, U S, let him get an eagle on his button, a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny he has earned the right to citizenship

Each man had options on what unit he would join.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you **enlist** in a unit with friends ? *Go to page 10.*
- ◇ Do you **enlist** in a unit that pays a **bounty**? *Go to page 3.*

We arrived yesterday in Indianapolis to join the unit. It is the 28th Infantry Regiment, **United States Colored Troops**. There are several hundred men already here; most are from Marion County. Many of the men here know each other. It is winter and the weather is cold. Some men are suffering from frostbite on their toes and fingers.

Each of us will be asked a number of questions, including his age. I am almost eighteen. To be a soldier a man must be eighteen. Drummer boys and buglers are younger, but I want to fight.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you want to be a drummer boy? *Go to page 12.*
- ◇ Do you give your correct age? *Go to page 11.*

White officers agreed it was not fair that black soldiers did not receive equal pay. So, the white officers, also, declined to take their pay. All the discipline of drilling prepared the 54th Massachusetts to prove themselves in South Carolina. They volunteered to lead the charge on Fort Wagner. There were heavy losses on this attack on that **Confederate** earthwork in the Charleston harbor.

African American soldiers were killed and injured in many other battles. Their courage led President Lincoln to write: "You say you will not fight to free Negroes...Some of them seem willing to fight for you."

Activities

- ◇ Write a speech supporting your view: I agree or disagree with President Lincoln. "I will fight to free slaves." Or "I will not fight to free slaves."
- ◇ Make an advertisement for troops. An example from the Indianapolis *Daily Journal* in 1865 read:

COLORED MEN, ATTENTION

\$375 EACH

Will be paid for twenty good men to go as

Volunteers to be credited to the city of
Indianapolis

The **Union** ships guarded the **Confederate** ports. This kept ships that brought supplies from Europe from docking. The merchants of the South in turn could not ship their cotton to Europe.

In the United States **Navy**, black and white sailors served side by side. Each man on a ship must do many different tasks. Serving on a ship meant that a man would be away from land for weeks at a time. Some men in their off-duty time play musical instruments and sing songs.

Activities

- ◇ Create a musical instrument from wood, leather, or cloth.
- ◇ Sing songs that sailors might sing.

A 3x5 card is made for everyone who joins the army. From these questions the commander will make a **roster**. The questions include: What is your full name? Where were you born? Where do you live now? What color are your eyes? What color is your hair? How tall are you? What do you do for a living? How old are you?

You must be eighteen to join the army. Many young men who are not quite old enough to join and do not want to lie about their age know a trick. They write the number “18” on a piece of paper. They place the piece of paper in their shoe. Now they can honestly say, that they are “over 18”.

Activities

- ◇ Make a recruiting card for yourself and your classmates.
- ◇ Make a graph or **roster** for your class, including the information on your cards.
- ◇ Debate the question: “What is the appropriate age for a person to **enlist** in the service of his or her country?”

In December of 1863, most people looked forward to the holidays. It was during this month, that Indiana's only African American regiment began recruiting. Their Camp Fremont was named for western explorer and 1856 anti-slavery candidate, John Charles Fremont. Here the unit drilled, near what today is called Fountain Square in Indianapolis.

The 28th Infantry Regiment, **United States Colored Troops**, trained until April 1864. On the eve of their departure the six regiments with flags and drums paraded through Indianapolis. Here is what was written:

"They walk erect, and bear themselves
as men who have rights
and dare to maintain them."

Indianapolis Daily Journal, April 22, 1864

Activities

- ◇ Draw a picture of the parade. Look in books for examples.
- ◇ Write a letter to the newspaper telling them why African Americans should be allowed to fight.

Eighty-one men from Indiana **enlisted** in the 54th Massachusetts during April and May of 1863. This was the first black regiment recruited in a northern state.

At camp the unit spent most of its day marching and learning to obey orders. Many of the officers were sons of white **abolitionists**. When it came time for the pay to be distributed, the African American soldiers earned less pay than the white soldiers.

What would you do?

- ◇ Do you refuse to take your pay? *Go to page 15.*
- ◇ Do you take the money and send it home? *Go to page 23.*

Interview

Chaplain Garland H. White The Voice of the 28th USCT

a fictional account
by reenactor Charles Poindexter*

Chaplain White, I'd like to thank you so much for meeting with us today. I understand that you were born into slavery in Virginia. Could you tell us how you were able to escape and make your way to Canada?

Yes, you're exactly right! I was born a slave in Hanover County Virginia in 1839. There in Hanover County I was taught by my masters to read and cipher. At that particular time, it was against the law to teach a slave to read and cipher. At the age of 12, I was taken away from my mama when they found out I could read and cipher and taken to Georgia and where they sold me to Senator Robert Toombs. My first night there I heard the people singing the gourd song and I found out what it was all about. One slave was going to escape that night, and they were telling him to look to the North Star, the Big Dipper was called the gourd, and you were supposed to follow the gourd north to freedom. Well, I wanted to escape, too.

What did Senator Toombs have you do?

Well, Senator Toombs made me his personal servant, and he also allowed me to preach to the people on the plantation. At this time, a slave could not talk to groups of more than 4 or 5 slaves unless a white person was present. Senator Toombs allowed me to talk to 10 or 15 slaves as I was talking religion to them.

Senator Tombs represented Georgia. Did you witness anything special when you were with him?

Yes, because I was Senator Toombs' personal servant, he would take me with him to Washington, D.C. when Congress was in session. In 1857, I was at Congress, and my master let me sit upstairs and watch the proceedings. A Congressman by the name of Charles Sumner took the floor. He spoke against slavery and he spoke real passionately for about an hour and a half. There was a Senator there from North Carolina by the name of Preston Brooks. Brooks came up to Sumner with a cane with a large brass knob on it and beat Congressman Sumner with the cane, knocking him out with the first blow and beating him over and over again with it. He beat him so badly that it was three or four years before Congressman Sumner was himself again.

So I made up my mind at that point that I was going to escape. And it wasn't until the next year that I made my way up to Canada.

You became a minister for the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Would you describe for us what the AME Church was?

In the 1787, a man by the name of Richard Allen and a group of other African Americans were asked to leave the St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia,

because the white people there were upset about having blacks attend their church, and so the whites forced the African Americans to leave. These African Americans formed their own church called the **African Methodist Episcopal Church**, or **AME Church**, and it is one of the oldest African American organizations that was ever formed in the United States.

When did you join the AME church?

When I escaped to Canada, I joined the **AME Church** in 1858, and I became a minister in 1859. Then the church moved me to Ohio with my wife to be in charge of a church. And then when the Civil War broke out in 1861, the **AME Church** took the lead in asking African Americans to join the services to fight for their freedom and end slavery.

When did you first begin recruiting African American troops?

I was quite passionate about getting African Americans to join. So I went to the east to help recruit for the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. There weren't very many African Americans in Massachusetts at the time, and so Frederick Douglass along with other individuals and the **AME Church** asked for volunteers to come to Massachusetts. At that particular time, as a free or escaped slave African American you could go any place to join the army, and so we went around the northern states asking people to join the 54th Massachusetts. We recruited people from Ohio and Michigan, and subsequently I worked my way back to this here Indiana territory.

How did you start recruiting in Indiana?

Out here I talked to your Governor Morton in October of 1863, and I tried to get him to start a regiment. I went to talk to Governor Morton with Willis Revells and Calvin Fletcher. Willis Revells was the pastor of the Bethel **AME Church** here in Indianapolis, which was the first **AME Church** in Indianapolis. And Calvin Fletcher is well-known in Indiana in the field of banking. Anyway, we went to talk to Governor Oliver P. Morton about putting together an African American Regiment.

What did Governor Morton do?

He decided to make a militia first, and he said he was going to make me chaplain. A month later, the U.S. Government took over the state militia and made it a federal unit. And so I said I'll join right there on the spot and stay with these guys, and so I joined. But I couldn't join as a chaplain, so they put me in as a private. But I worked as a chaplain and did everything that a chaplain was supposed to do, except get the pay and the rank.

How did you get the federal government to recognize you as a Chaplain?

Subsequently I wrote letters to Secretary of War Stanton and others, asking for the rank of chaplain, saying nobody else wanted my job, and I got the support of the white officers, and so finally they relinquished and they let me have that spot. So I became the chaplain for the 28th **USCT**, and the chaplain's rank is like that of a captain. However, they did not give me a uniform. They were fearful that I'd have to be saluted. So I just

wore my civilian clothes, and that proved quite difficult at times like when I'd try to go to the hospital to visit the ill or wounded men. I'd have to find someone to vouch for me as being the chaplain. It wasn't until 1865 that I got a chaplain's uniform.

Where did you take your training with the 28th USCT?

We took our basic training at Camp Fremont. Right now people call it Fountain Square. You know, over by Shelbyville Road and Shelbourne. It was named after Colonel John C. Fremont. I don't know if you're familiar with this or not, but Fremont was the first Republican person to run for president in 1856. The Republican Party was formed in 1854 for the sole purpose of ending slavery. Fremont ran and was defeated. The next man who ran on that sort of platform won. And his name was Abraham Lincoln.

What type of training did the men receive at Camp Fremont?

We took our training there at Camp Fremont. We learned military courtesy, military discipline, we learned how to care for our weapons, and march. We learned how to build latrines and pup tents and eat hardtack and beef jerky.

What were some of the differences between the duty and pay and benefits of the U.S. Colored Troops and that of the white regiments of the Union?

Something interesting about when we joined the military, we joined thinking we got a \$300 **bounty** from the federal government to join and \$100 **bounty** from the state to join. So when we joined, we thought we were going to get the same pay as whites. The white soldiers were getting \$13 per month plus \$3.50 clothing allowance, plus a ration. When we joined, they paid us \$10 a month, and \$3 of that \$10 was taken for clothing. So we actually only got \$7 a month. And so we argued our point, and several of us did not take our money. It wasn't until a year later that the government yielded and gave us the same pay as they gave the white soldiers.

After leaving Indiana, the 28th USCT went to Washington, D.C. and then on to Virginia. What did you do in Washington, D.C.?

We went to Washington, D.C., and that was our first station, to guard the nation's capital. And we took some more training there, because we needed to be ready for combat. We were attached to General Burnside's unit, the 9th Army Corps. We had quite a few skirmishes after that. And then in July in 1864, we had the Battle of the Crater. And let me tell you, that was a battle and a half.

Can you describe for us The Battle of the Crater in Petersburg, Virginia? How was the 28th USCT involved?

Part of the 9th Corps was your 48th Pennsylvania volunteers. A lot of these men were coal miners. And so they came up with this idea. Johnny Reb, meaning the **Confederates**, was up on high ground, and they were blocking us from going to Petersburg, which was on our way to the Confederate capital of Richmond. So they came up with the idea of tunneling under the rebel encampment. So these miners of the

48th Pennsylvania dug a tunnel 500 feet long. We were supposed to use 12,000 pounds of black powder, but we only had 8,000 pounds of black powder. So anyway, everyone was ready to go. And the plan was that when the explosion went off, we, the 28th **USCT** and another **USCT**, were supposed to attack. This was something we had been practicing for. Unfortunately, there was a change of plans, and the commanding officers decided that they wouldn't send the **USCTs** in first. This wasn't because they didn't think we could do it or thought we weren't ready. They were afraid of what people would think if they were sending the African American troops in first. They were concerned that people would think the commanding officers were sacrificing the **U.S. Colored Troops**, and so they made plans to send in other troops ahead of us.

How were the original plans changed?

Well, for some reason or another the explosion didn't go off on time. It was supposed to go off at 3:30 in the morning, and it didn't. So we waited another hour, and it didn't go at 4:30 in the morning. So, some of the soldiers started drifting off to take care of personal hygiene. Some started putting their weapons down, some started drifting off to sleep, some went to wash their face and stuff like that. Turns out they had used bad fuses. But later, all of a sudden the ground shook. I looked over at where Johnny Reb was, and I saw body parts flying in the air. That explosion dug a 200 foot long crater, 25 feet deep and 50 feet wide.

Why did those plans meet with such disastrous results?

The 28th **USCT** were all together, and they held us up for 45 minutes after the explosion, waiting for the order to go. We finally got the order to go, and when we did, there were other **Union** soldiers walking toward us and past us, retreating. But we kept moving forward, because our charge was to take the hill. But we hadn't expected Johnny Reb to be able to regroup so fast. And so as we were in the crater, Johnny Reb was firing down on us, and we had real trouble getting up the sides. It was just like sand and 25 feet high and hard to climb. And so Johnny Reb just kept taking pot shots at us, killing everyone who was left there mostly. Part of the Colored Troops made it to the top.

What happened to those men who made it to the top of the crater?

Johnny Reb was so angry at seeing the Colored Troops that they didn't take a single prisoner. They'd have their hands up in the air to surrender, and the **Confederates** would shoot them right in the head. I saw one soldier get shot in the head. One soldier got bayoneted, and another soldier was down on his knees, pleading for his life, and no sooner had he got up than three **Confederate** soldiers stabbed him with a bayonet.

I understand that there was an investigation after The Battle of the Crater. What were the findings of that investigation?

They had a big inquest after the Battle of the Crater. This was an investigation of the facts surrounding the actions of the troops and officers at this battle. It was found that we fought quite bravely. People had heard that there was a lot of retreating going on, and for awhile, those rumors didn't reflect very well on the **U.S. Colored Troops**. But it was found that we did our job to the fullest, and we were not guilty of or responsible for

the retreat at the Crater. They were retreating before we got to the battle. And they credited us with being good soldiers.

After the fall of Petersburg in April, 1865, the men of the 28th USCT were some of the first to enter Richmond. Can you describe for us how Richmond reacted to the presence of African American soldiers?

The 28th **USCT** was the first troop to march into Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. And it was a great day when we marched into Richmond. The white members of the city of Richmond closed their shutters and doors and would not look at us. However, slaves there made a big celebration out of it. They whooped and hollered and wished us well. And a lot of them were looking for their loved ones because they just lived a couple of blocks down, but they never did get to see each other because they were slaves. We were very proud to be there to march into Richmond, Virginia with General Sherman.

What was your unit's assignment while in Richmond?

We took occupation of the city in charge of the **Confederate** prisoners, and they took offense of us being in charge of them. They complained to our commanding officers that they did not like having African American troops in charge of them.

There is a very special personal event that occurred for you in Richmond. Will you tell us what that was?

Well, there was some commotion outside of my tent. A soldier came in and said, "Sir, come out here, please! This woman says that she's your mother!" Remember, at the age of 12, I was sold away from my mother. And, lo and behold, it WAS my mother, and she was looking for Garland White. I hadn't seen her for many years, and I met my mama then, and it was quite a warm and inspiring sight to see her.

After the war was over, the 28th USCT had to serve for one more year, and this time was spent in Texas. How did you get to Texas?

Finally we were sent east to a port city where we got on a boat and went all the way around Florida and went to Brazos Santiago, Texas, near the mouth of the Rio Grande.

What were their responsibilities in Texas?

Then at Corpus Christi, Texas, that's where we got off. It seems that the Apaches were raiding the Mexicans, and the Mexicans didn't like it, and they threatened to retaliate. The U.S. didn't want that to happen, and so the 28th **USCT** was charged with keeping the Apaches from raiding Mexican settlements and with keeping the Mexicans from coming across the border. We built roads there in Texas. We ran telegraph lines. We built bridges. Texas was the most horrendous place for us that we'd ever been in our military lives, Texas was. It was so hot. Men died from malaria, from scurvy. And just like our medical facilities had been during the war, the facilities for these sick men were inadequate.

How did the Texans like your being there?

We did our job. And part of our job was also to protect the settlers in Texas. But the Texans, who had been on the losing side of the war, felt they were being penalized by having African American soldiers. The Texans were supposed to have set their slaves free, but they wouldn't do it. So we had to help in setting the slaves free in Texas. And that made the Texans a little mad.

When the 28th USCT returned to Indianapolis, what sorts of events led to their mustering out?

We stayed in Texas until we got orders to move and be **mustered out**. We returned to Indianapolis to muster out, and that was a glorious day! I'll never forget the day! January 8, 1866, our soldiers were looking spiffy, and we marched down Washington Street to the Soldiers' Home. We had a sumptuous meal there, a meal fit for a king. The Republican paper reported on our march down Washington Street and called us "ebony soldiers."

Were there celebrations to honor the efforts of these men?

At the ceremony, Lt. Governor Baker spoke first, and I spoke next. I said we had fought a good fight. I said we were first class citizens at the **cartridge** box and that we were first class citizens back here in Indiana when we came back home.

Well, it took some time for that to be so. Nonetheless, that was my speech.

What honors did the federal government give men of the USCT?

It's quite noteworthy that there were more than 20 Medal of Honor winners from **USCT** troops in the Civil War. I thought that was quite noteworthy, because at the time we were formed, people said that we couldn't fight, didn't want to fight, and we proved to the contrary under extreme circumstances. We proved ourselves. Abraham Lincoln wrote a letter saying that we had proven our manhood and we were worthy of everything we got.

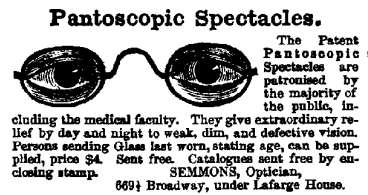
Looking back over the entire experience, what would you say were the greatest contributions these men of the 28th USCT made to the war efforts?

They proved themselves men. They proved themselves Americans, and they proved themselves worthy of being first class citizens of the United States. And they ended slavery. It was really the 13th amendment to the Constitution that ended slavery. The 14th amendment made African Americans citizens of the United States. And then in 1870 the 15th amendment gave African American men the right to vote. But it was truly the efforts of these brave men, the **United States Colored Troops**, that helped to turn the tide of the war and put an end to slavery in the United States, once and for all.

*Mr. Charles Poindexter has carefully researched the life of Chaplain Garland White and portrays Chaplain White at museums, schools and Crown Hill Cemetery. Mr. Poindexter lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.

TEACHERS NOTES

At the end of each story line, in *To Be a Soldier, You Decide*, are two or three activities. Here is the list divided into discussion questions and individual activities with the page in the story noted.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◇ Debate the question: "What is the appropriate age for a person to **enlist** in the service of his or her country?" Page 11
- ◇ Read aloud about the march into Richmond. Assign students to read aloud the roles of Chaplain White and the interviewer, or role play Chaplain White and his mother meeting in Richmond. Page 22
- ◇ Debate the question: "Should girls and women be allowed to carry rifles and fight?" Page 23
- ◇ Make a list of actions you can do now that would carry on the spirit of Samuel Smothers. Discuss the list with the class. Page 24
- ◇ Make a table showing why African Americans would or would not join the army or **navy**. Discuss the chart with the class. Page 24

ACTIVITIES

- ◇ Write an account of the battle in a letter home or in your journal. Page 8
- ◇ Draw a picture for the illustrated magazine of the battle. Look at illustrations in books for ideas. Page 8
- ◇ Make a recruiting card for yourself and your classmates. Page 11
- ◇ Make a graph or **roster** for your class, including the information on your cards. Page 11
- ◇ Draw a picture of the parade. Look in books for examples. Page 12
- ◇ Write a letter to the newspaper telling them why African Americans should be allowed to fight. Page 12
- ◇ Create a musical instrument from wood, leather, or cloth. Page 14
- ◇ Sing songs that sailors might sing. Page 14
- ◇ Write a speech supporting your view: "I agree with President Lincoln. I will fight to free slaves." "I disagree with President Lincoln. I will not fight to free slaves." Page 15
- ◇ Make an advertisement for troops. An example from the Indianapolis *Daily Journal* in 1865. Page 15
- ◇ Draw a map of the places where the 28th **USCT** served. Page 19
- ◇ Make a time line of the service of the 28th **USCT** and other major Civil War battles. Page 19
- ◇ Write a letter home describing what it felt like to drill and prepare to be a part of a big battle. Page 21
- ◇ Draw a picture of your best friend in his full uniform. Page 21
- ◇ Write a letter home telling how you feel about going into the Battle of the Crater. Page 22
- ◇ Fill in a Company Muster role. Write a paragraph describing information on the sheet. Page 23

VOCABULARY

- abolitionists** – people who wanted to put an end to slavery
- African Methodist Episcopal (AME)** – one of the first churches founded by African Americans
- Anti-Slavery Friends (Quakers)** – members of a religious organization who believed in the abolition of slavery
- bounty** – money paid to a person who chose to join a military unit
- cartridge** – Minie ball and powder in a paper wrapper
- cavalry** – soldiers who are mounted on horses and scout for the army
- Confederate** – also called Rebels; shortened from the Confederate States of America; people who supported the states that seceded from the United States of America
- conservative** – people who held the view that the south should be allowed to keep their slaves
- draft** – choosing eligible men for required military service
- Emancipation Proclamation** – act adopted January 1, 1863, freeing slaves in **Confederate** territory; predecessor of the 13th amendment to the Constitution
- enlist** – to freely join a unit
- enlistment** – amount of time agreed to serve in a unit
- musket** – shoulder-held gun with a long barrel
- mustered out** – to officially leave the military service
- navy** – sea-born fighting unit
- quota** – assigned number
- roster** – list of members of a unit
- Union** – also called Federalists, people who supported the United States of America
- United States Colored Troops (USCT)** – regiments formed exclusively of African American men with volunteer, white officers

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On-line Sources

Civil War Soldiers and Sailor – home page

<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/>

An excellent source for battle summaries, organized by campaign or state. Brief information about African American sailors. Describes ongoing research by Howard University.

Colonel Eli Lilly Civil War Museum – home page

<http://www.state.in.us/wm/civilwar/index.html>

Located in the base of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument on the Circle in Indianapolis, this web site offers a virtual tour of the museum, directions to the museum, volunteer information, and a number of valuable links to other sites.

Freetown Village – home page

<http://www.freetownvillage.org>

This living history museum of African American life in Indiana in 1870 provides excellent information and links regarding the Hoosier black experience in the mid-nineteenth century.

Harper's Weekly

www.harpweek.com

Great 19th century primary source with specific information on Black Americans from 1857 - 1874. Civil War African American Soldiers, and a sampler of Civil War literature.

National Archives and Records Administration

<http://www.nara.gov/education/teaching/usct/home.html>

Lesson plan: "The Fight for Equal Rights: Black Soldiers in the Civil War." This lesson is a part of the *Teaching with Documents* series.

Walden Font Co.

www.waldenfont.com

The Civil War Press, Fonts and Clip Art for Civil War Enthusiasts. Winchester, MA: Walden Font Co. Fonts and illustrations in these lesson plans are from this CD ROM disc.

Worksheet 1

MUSTER ROLL

	60		USCT
<hr/>			
<hr/>			

_____, Co. A, 60 Reg't U.S. Col'd Infantry
rank _____
Appears on _____

Company Muster Roll

for _____, 186

Present or absent _____

Stoppage, \$ _____ 100 for _____

Due Gov't, \$ _____ 100 for _____

Remarks: _____

Book mark: _____

